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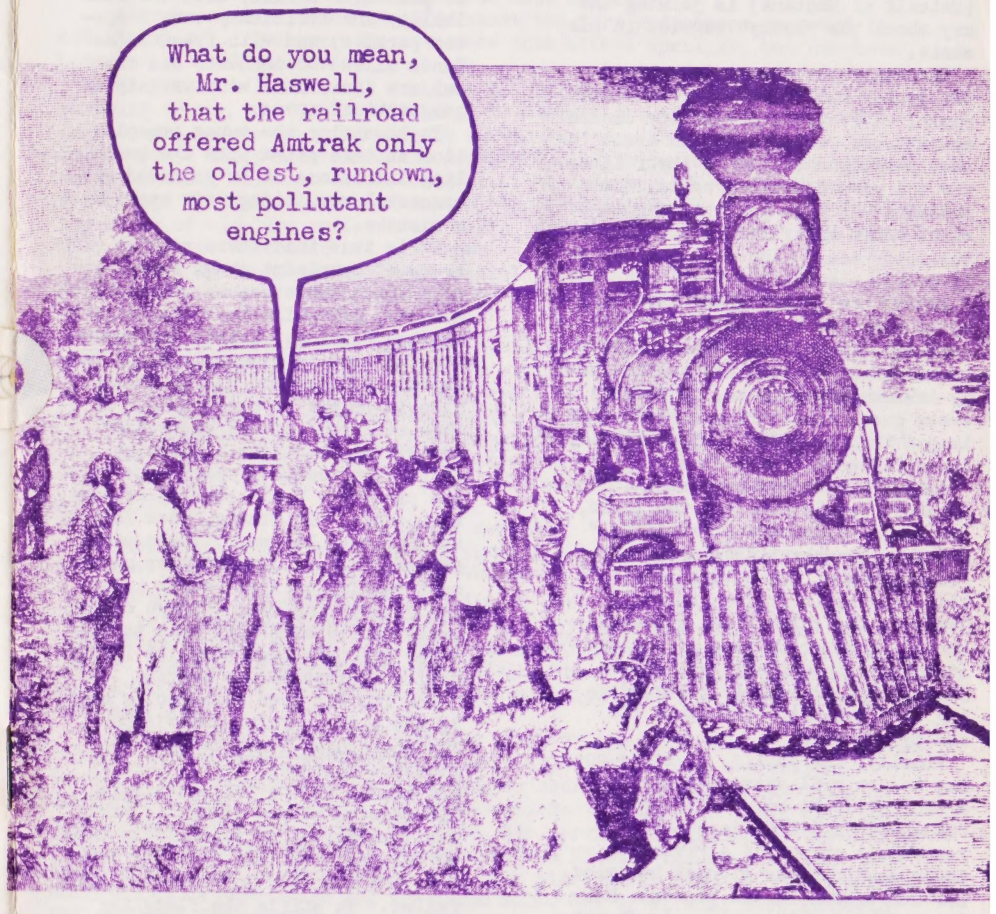
Vol. 2 No. 7
April 3, 1972

#33

RAIL TRAVEL newsletter



NEW Amtrak SCHEDULES

Potomac Turbo brouhaha

EDITORIALS: PROPOSED ICC REGULATIONS

(An honest difference of opinion exists in our ranks concerning the Interstate Commerce Commission's proposal to adopt standards for passenger train operations. Below are two editorials expressing two sides of the question.)

PAUL RAYTON: FOR

Many hoped that the creation of Amtrak would result in improved passenger service in areas such as on-time performance, prompt reservations, functional equipment, etc.

Unfortunately, the cavalier attitudes of the "bad old days" still seem to prevail. Even as I write this (April 5) yet another Senator (Metcalf of Montana) is joining the cry about the "lousy" service in his state.

The contracts between Amtrak and the member railroads provide no financial motivation, no penalty clause against the carriers in the event that passenger trains on their lines are not provided preferential dispatching. (These proposed regulations would apply to the non-Amtrak railroads too.) And such motivation is sorely needed.

Amtrak has hardly shown the ability to make its various trains run consistently on time. These regular operational problems are particularly irksome now because, in almost every case, train trips in 1972 take longer than the "old" trains running those routes 10-15 years ago.

Amtrak and others contend that the proposed regulations are too rigid, and would "eliminate flexibility." Not so. How about the increased flexibility of being virtually sure that your train arrives on time? Granted, the rules finally adopted should incorporate some of the constructive suggestions made to the Commission, especially those dealing with bypassing the usual ICC red-tape snarl.

Finally, the public, if it is going to use rail passenger service again, needs to be doubly, triply, reassured that travelers have a reasonable chance of arriving at their destinations without becoming nervous wrecks in the process. Making Amtrak and the railroads directly responsible for minimum standards of service—if the standards are written with care and enforced—surely can't hurt.

JAMES RUSSELL: AGAINST

Amtrak has been given a Congressional mandate to attempt something never before possible with American rails—to run a unified system of passenger trains, with the flexibility and efficiency such a system permits, and with freedom (as funds allow) to innovate and try out new ideas in a wide variety of geographical areas.

To hamstring the young organization at this point with the bumbling intrusions of an outmoded governmental regulating body would be a mistake.

It is true that there remain areas of complaint about Amtrak operations. These can be attributed, however, primarily to Amtrak's very limited funding. Amtrak has demonstrated that it sincerely wants to improve service and has no intention to engage in the laxities of some railroads of the past under individual operation. Likewise, there have been few complaints about the passenger train-running non-Amtrak roads, Rio Grande, Rock Island, and Southern Railway. There seems no need to establish further government regulation when Amtrak is already under the watchful eye of Congress and is much more open to consumer reaction than were the individual railroads before Amtrak.

The ICC has been attacked by nearly all sides. Ralph Nader's book, The Interstate Commerce Omission, attempts to detail inefficiencies and biases in the ICC's dealings. The agency, before Amtrak, clearly was ineffectual in maintaining needed passenger service. Amtrak took over the function in which the ICC failed. To stifle the fledgling

(continued on page 15)

Rail Travel Newsletter, Vol 2, No 7 (whole No. 33), April 3, 1972.
Published twice monthly, on the 1st and 3rd Mondays, by Message Media,
Box 9007, Berkeley, Calif. 94709. Subscription $6 a year; 25¢ a copy.
STAFF: James Russell, Editor; Paul Rayton, Editor-at-Large; Richard Tower,
Research Editor; Steve Farrar, East Coast Editor; John ("Doug") Ellis,
East Coast Photographer.

AMTRAK'S FORTHCOMING SCHEDULE PLANS

by Steve Farrar and Jim Russell

The next major schedule changes will take place April 30. However, no nationwide timetable will be issued for that date. Instead, four regional timetables (West, Midwest, East and Northeast--plus a separate N.Y.-Buffalo schedule) will be published. Individual railroads will probably, as in the past, print separate timetables as well.

Amtrak's summer changes will take effect June 11, and a nationwide schedule for that date is planned to be ready by the middle of May. Early distribution of such a timetable would be an innovation for Amtrak, since previous schedules have usually found their way around the country weeks or in some cases months after they were to take effect.

Amtrak has had second thoughts about the fare reductions reported in RTN (March 20). They were to have gone into effect April 30, but now have been indefinitely postponed.

The SUNSET LIMITED will continue to run tri-weekly. Amtrak is still planning to run the CITY OF SF daily, to operate a second Los Angeles-Chicago train, and to inaugurate daily service between Vancouver, B.C. and San Diego (a daily extended COAST STARLIGHT). However, these plans hinge on the funding bill now before Congress, the shortage of equipment, and a shortage of train service employees (since recent retirements have thinned the ranks of old-line professional cooks, waiters and porters). When and if they will take effect is not now known.

On the New York-Buffalo route, April 30 will see trains leaving N.Y. on the hour for five roundtrips daily—two to Albany, one to Syracuse, and two to Buffalo.

Kansas City residents, starting April 30, will be able to leave for New York on the NATIONAL LIMITED at a more civilized hour. The train will depart at 9:40am instead of 5:40am, and will reach NY at 1:55pm. Westbound it leaves NY 1:30pm (instead of 4:55pm) and arrives at KC at 4:40pm.

The BROADWAY LIMITED has no changes scheduled. In the Chicago-Detroit corridor, the two trains will leave Detroit at 8:45am and 2:30pm (instead of 9:30am and 5pm) and depart Chicago at 10:30am and 4:15pm (instead of 8:40am and 4:05pm).

northeast corridor

Amtrak seems to have a winning formula going in the Boston-Washington "Northeast Corridor." Figures from the month of February show an increase in ridership of all conventional trains of 46%. At the same time, the increase in ridership between Boston and New York was 71%! Total New York-Washington traffic was up 2.3%, with the METROLINERS maintaining a 58% load factor. Amtrak decided to stop advertising the METROLINERS because the ads were creating a demand that couldn't be satisfied with the limited number of cars available.

April 30 will see Amtrak sticking close to the present successful scheduling. Two more METROLINER runs will be added, replacing conventional trains. Thus METROS will leave Washington hourly from 6am to 6pm inclusive, plus one at 8pm. (In summer the aforementioned NY-Savannah train will leave Washington northbound at 5am, providing the service now filled by the BUNKER HILL.) Southbound METROLINER departures from NY will follow this same pattern, with trains leaving on the half-hour starting at 6:30am. The 1pm METROLINER out of Washington and the 11:30 METRO out of NY will stop at North Philadelphia for thru passengers from or to points west of Harrisburg.

There will be no more non-stop METROLINERS. This move was necessitated by the need for more equipment to fill the hourly schedules.

The NIGHT OWL, a reinstatement of the former FEDERAL overnight train between Boston and Washington, will be born April 30. It will carry a sleeper, buffet lounge sleeper, and two legrest coaches. Southern Railway will

adjust the schedule of the PIEDMONT to connect at Washington with the NIGHT OWL, carrying a thru coach between Boston and Atlanta. The new overnight train requires combining the first two morning NY to Boston departures into one train, and the last two evening Boston to NY departures into one. Train 184, the 6:10pm NY to Boston train, will be given the old B&M name, the MINUTEMAN.

On the NY-Florida runs, the FLORIDA SPECIAL has its last seasonal run April 16 and will be taken out of service. The SILVER METEOR and the CHAMPION will operate on nearly their present schedule. However, the SILVER STAR gets a big change: it will leave NY southbound at 9:15am instead of 8. Northbound it will leave Miami at 12:15pm instead of 7:10pm, and will arrive in NY at 4:55pm. The earlier Miami departure more closely matches checkout times of hotels, and should generate more business.

The Chicago-Florida train will be combined in Jacksonville with the SILVER STAR, and will not carry cars for the Florida west coast. It will be cut to a four-car train. Passengers headed for the west coast can change cars after it is combined with the SILVER STAR at Jacksonville. Northbound departure time will be shifted to 12:15pm, to arrive in Chicago at 6am, with car occupancy allowed until 7.

Conventional trains, as of April 30, will no longer make the NY-Washington run per se, with the exception of 7pm northbound FREE STATE. All conventional trains on the route will be either NY-Florida or Boston-Washington trains. Three trains will be added NY-Philadelphia and one the other direction, providing more train service thru New Jersey. Philadelphia-Harrisburg route will have no major changes, and likewise NY-Springfield.

The NY-Pittsburgh KEYSTONE will be dropped, and the NATIONAL LIMITED will handle the traffic it now carries. The latter will make all the present stops of the KEYSTONE except Coatesville. Passengers to and from Washington and Baltimore will make an across-the-platform change in North Philadelphia with a METROLINER.

The following routes will have no changes April 30, but most are planned to have major changes effective June 11: Washington-Parkersburg; Chicago-Seattle; Milwaukee-St. Louis; Chicago-Cincinnati-Newport News/Washington (except that no cars will run north of Washington); Chicago-Houston; Chicago-Los Angeles; Chicago-San Francisco; New Orleans-Los Angeles; Seattle-San Diego.

Effective June 11 the eastbound SUNSET LIMITED will leave Los Angeles 1 hour earlier. The CITY OF SAN FRANCISCO will leave Oakland ½-hr later, and arrive Oakland ½-hour earlier. The COAST STARLIGHT will have a minor timing change of 10 or 15mins.

Amtrak has been working on a revised, standard, one-class fare structure to be based upon western coach rates. This means that, in general, eastern fares will be cut, and western ones may rise in some cases. At this point there is some doubt that Amtrak will have the new tariffs ready for the projected July 1 date, however.

SUPER CHIEF SERVICE SAVED?

Like the little boy who cried "wolf!", we've been reporting off and on recently that Amtrak had plans to drop the luxury dining service of the SUPER CHIEF. Our last report (RTN Mar.20) was that it would end April 15. These reports were not rumors, but accurately reflected Amtrak's vacillations about the move. Now again, at the last minute, Amtrak has reportedly decided to keep the famous train's menu intact. A standard Amtrak menu for the nation is being prepared (this does not mean, however, that the same food will always be served on every train), but the SUPER CHIEF has been exempted from this "humiliation." Santa Fe people will continue to write the SUPER menu, the only train in the nation with such a distinction, and will presumably preserve the Champagne Dinner and the other amenities.

East Coast Report

by Steve Farrar

Your East Coast editor, photographer and dates rode the FLORIDA SPECIAL from Richmond to Washington and return on Easter Sunday (April 2).

Washington Union Station fronts on the Mall, making the train the easiest way to reach the Capitol, the Smithsonian and the Washington Monument. Parking space is almost non-existent. There was no problem getting four coach seats northbound, but southbound space was unavailable, altho the Richmond agent called Jacksonville, Washington & New York over a 2-day period. We went anyway--and the southbound train proved to have two totally empty coaches and two half-empty! The SPECIAL was strictly on time both ways, provided 9 entrees for breakfast, as well as the legendary candlelight dinner with free champagne on the return.

AUTO-TRAIN continues to prosper. For example, the southbound train on Sunday, March 27 had 30 cars behind its two GE diesels. There were 14 auto carriers, 3 non-revenue standard cars, 6 full-length domes, 6 standard sleepers, and Southern Railway office car #15. The train left Richmond 30mins late. We wonder if the consist was too heavy for two engines to maintain the schedule. The northbound AUTO-TRAIN has arrived 1-2 hours late several times recently.

METROLINERS are to be rebuilt to overcome severe maintenance problems. Dynamic brake grids will be moved to the roof because of undercar overheating. Clean air for cooling will also be drawn from the roof. METROLINERS will be regeared to a lower, more realistic level. There is a possibility of enclosing the undersides.

CANADIAN NATIONAL TURBOS may be altered under a proposal by United Aircraft of Canada. The present five 7-car trains would be transformed into three 9-car trains to suit the need for larger trains in the Montreal-Toronto market. Eight spare cars would result, and might be offered to the U.S. Train capacity would go to 400 from 294. Turbine horsepower would be upgraded to 520 from 400. A decision by CN is awaited, after which 10 months of work would be required.

IF YOU, like us, always check a train's timekeeping when you ride it, you may become befuddled using the Jan. 16 Amtrak timetable to check the Newport News-Chicago trains. Actual arrival and departure times are not always shown. Below are times at such points:

Westbound-read down					Eastbound-read up		
Amtrak	Actual				Amtrak	Actual	
6:00 p	6:00 p	Ar	Richmond	Lv	12:50 p	12:55 p	
	6:05 p	Lv	Richmond			12:50 p	
none	8:20 p	Lv	Charlottesville (Main St.)	Ar	none	10:30 a	
10:25 p	10:25 p	Ar	Clifton Forge	Lv	8:15 a	8:18 a	
	10:32 p	Lv	Clifton Forge	Ar		8:11 a	
12:25 a	12:23 a	Ar	Hinton	Lv	6:15 a	6:20 a	
	12:30 a	Lv	Hinton	Ar		6:12 a	
3:40 a	3:40 a	Ar	Huntington	Lv	2:55 a	3:05 a	
	3:50 a	Lv	Huntington	Ar		2:55 a	
4:15 a	4:15 a	Ar	Ashland	Lv	2:20 a	2:30 a	
	4:25 a	Lv	Ashland	Ar		2:20 a	

FORT EUSTIS (VA.) Military Railroad gives train rides a couple times each week to school classes from the Newport News area. The kids typically have never ridden a train before and they are thrilled. The train usually consists of an SW1000 switcher or a foreign-modified GP9 with two coaches converted from streamlined ACF hospital cars. It is the most pleasant part of your reporter's Army duty to serve as

brakeman aboard these Kiddie Trains as we give the kids a 12-mile loop ride around the James River Sub-division. The kids are almost guaranteed a look at a few deer in the swampy part of the post. When we pass three old troop train Pullmans with vandalized windows, at least one child inevitably asks if that wasn't caused by enemy bullets.

The teacher often has never ridden a train, either, and she is nonplussed by the 15mph speed and the coach seating--school bus seats, used theater seats, flipover coach seats. We try to point out that the Amtrak train that passes a mile off post runs 75mph and features a modern dome car. And invariably the teacher will say that she didn't know that Newport News had any passenger service at all. Amtrak ran a newspaper ad here only once, and that was an incorrect one announcing a non-existent service to Washington D.C.!

MISCELLANY: Nine Western Pacific CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR cars went to National Railways of Mexico... A refurbished and painted Amtrak coach and sleeper are running on the FLORIDA SPECIAL... Consist of westbd BROADWAY LIMITED #41 April 3: Two GG-1 engines NY-Harrisburg (four E units Harrisburg-Chicago); two NYC baggage (1 from Harrisburg, 1 from NY); 2 UP coaches; CB&Q slumbercoach "Silver Repose"; PC (former D&RGW) lounge; PRR twin-unit diner; UP sleeper "Placid Water"; PRR sleeper "Greenwood"; UP coach; UP sleeper "Pacific Shore"; PC coach. (One coach & sleeper changed at Harrisburg to #31 for Kansas City; one coach and sleeper from Washington to Chicago added at Harrisburg; these are included in above consist.) Well-patronized; Chicago arrival on time...

Consist of eastbd NATIONAL LIMITED #30 April 5: Two MoPac E units Kansas City to St. Louis (two PC E's St. Louis-Harrisburg); UP sleeper "Pacific Sunset" and UP coach off at Harrisburg bound for Washington; NYC diner-tavern; UP sleeper "Pacific Waters" and UP coach changed to #40 at Harrisburg bound for NY. This train also well-patronized; St. Louis arrival 30mins late; Harrisburg arrival on time...

Feb. 4, 1970 a mail car left Philadelphia for Birmingham in a Penn Central passenger train. The car was found March 14, 1972, on a PC siding in Perryville, Maryland. The mail was still aboard...

Penn Central must continue its Providence-Westerly, R.I., commuter service, the ICC has ruled. Train is dropped Westerly-New London... For POTOMAC TURBO information, write Amtrak Turbo, Box 474, Riverdale, Md. 20840... Southern Railway has purchased Atlanta Terminal Co. so as to dissolve it... PC wants to abandon .23 miles of its St. Louis line in Pittsburgh for an expressway. Whither the NATIONAL LIMITED?

Penn Central engine in Amtrak paint is seen on the BROADWAY LIMITED at Chicago Union Station in the fall of 1971. Photo by Message Media.

FROM C&O we learn that those rumors about the C&O Amtrak changes came about because Amtrak kept changing its mind every few days. It's true that Amtrak was seriously considering making the Newport News-Cincinnati run into a daylight service, using the SR PIEDMONT as the Washington connection (without thru cars), and tying into the FLORIDIAN from Chicago.

None of this will happen immediately, if at all. Present plans are to leave the C&O service essentially as it is now. The major change will be that the train will terminate in Washington rather than run thru to Boston. There are still vague plans to reschedule it as a daylight run, but this will not happen until summer, if it happens at all. Main St. Station in Richmond, Va., will continue to be used until the new Amtrak station is opened, which will be sometime around the first of the year--at the earliest. (The new station will replace both Broad St. and Main St., and will be located somewhere out around Acca yard.)

Amtrak purchased all the remaining C&O and B&O passenger diesels. Some B&O units have been used on other lines, notably SCL and PC.

TRUST
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RED CAP

MAJOR stations along the way employ reliable people to help you with your bags.
THEY WEAR RED CAPS.
All baggage they handle is covered by insurance. You have a receipt. The fee is small.
If others offer to help, REFUSE THEIR SERVICE. Their charges are not regulated. It could be unpleasant when time comes to "settle up".
AMTRAK wishes you a pleasant trip —and wants to keep it that way.

Amtrak
WE'RE MAKING TRAINS WORTH TRAVELING AGAIN

LETTERS

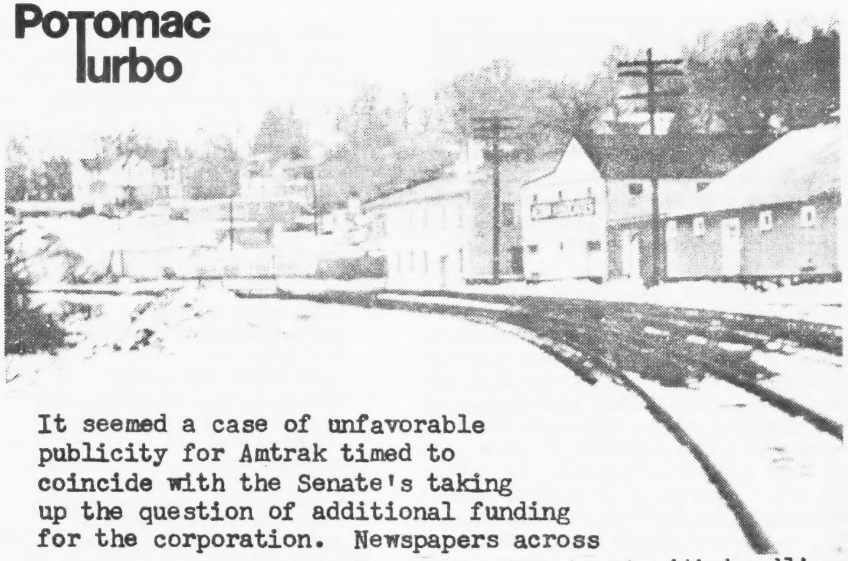
(To Richard Tower:) The SUNSET LIMITED came in here last week with the following consist:

Baldwin model DR12-8-30 "centipede" diesel, Amtrak #3804 (ex-PRR 5816)
EMD F3 (no markings; ex-NYC&W, ex-Sacramento Northern)
EMD F7 (painted SP freight colors, initialed W.A.G.-Sole Leather Line)
East Broad Top photo excursion car in use as baggage/dorm
2 California Western (ex-Erie "Stilwell") coaches
1 Chihuahua del Pacifico coach with Amtrak logo near right door
1 Rutland coach
1 dining car--standard heavyweight with Ringling Bros.-Barnum & Bailey markings
1 sleeper (14 bunk/2 water closet) with AT&SF MofW markings
1 blue sleeper bearing the markings "Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lits" & a small sign reading "Simplon-Orient Express"
1 automat car in yellow wood with brown clerestory roof and "Santa Fe & Disneyland" markings.

I think you'd better come down here and investigate.

Dave Schumacher
Houston, Tex.

Potomac Turbo



It seemed a case of unfavorable publicity for Amtrak timed to coincide with the Senate's taking up the question of additional funding for the corporation. Newspapers across the nation burst out with headlines March 30 and 31 proclaiming the news just released by Associated Press that the POTOMAC TURBO is running a sparsely populated route between Washington DC and Parkersburg WV because of the political power of Rep. Harley Staggers (D-WV), who heads the House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, and who must approve any Amtrak funding request.

In places it was the most widely publicized train news since the Penn Central bankruptcy. In Los Angeles, where one survey shows that about 1 in 25 people even know what Amtrak is, the top headline of the Times told one and all that a "Supertrain Chugs to Nowhere." The San Francisco Examiner called it "Amtrak's $69,-500 Milk Run."

Amtrak watchers, of course, have known all along about the "Harley Staggers Special," nickname of the WEST VIRGINIAN which ran the 351-mi route daily, first appearing in the Nov. 14 Amtrak system timetable. That conventional train was replaced (except for some weekend runs) Feb.7 by the TURBO equipment that made the nationwide tour last August.

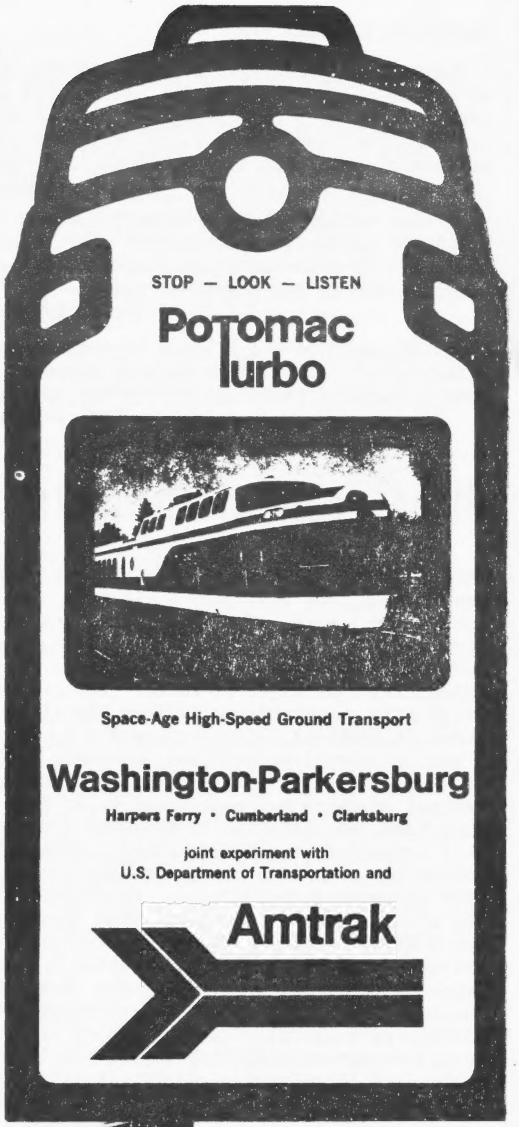
←

(Photo on p.8: POTOMAC TURBO shot by Doug Ellis on a snowy Feb. 26 at Oakland, MD, has just crossed Cranberry Grade and is about to descend for 17 miles.)

The TURBO is running for 6 months as an "experiment" ostensibly to determine how the train runs in difficult terrain. In so doing, reported the AP, the train is losing $69,-500 monthly. On a "typical" run, said the AP, 3 passengers would be aboard when the train reached Parkersburg.

Railfan criticism of the situation has been strong. Transport Central editorialized (Mar.6) about "political kowtowing of the most brazen sort" and concluded that it is "a run that could most comfortably be served by a snack-bar-equipped RDC (if it should run at all), not the flagship of the fleet (which is urgently needed elsewhere)."

Will any good come of the whole affair? Perhaps. At least the report implies that everyone would like a nice fast TURBO in his home community.



(Left: The TURBO seen at Los Angeles on its nationwide tour last August. Photo by Paul Rayton.)

QUOTES OF THE WEEK ***

"Amtrak and (Passenger Representative) Miss Nies freely admit what a lot of people had been saying for years—that dirty, slow, late trains run by crusty conductors over lumpy roadbeds on most lines had given all U.S. trains a bad name. So bad, in fact, the passenger train had come close to extinction until Amtrak came along last May."

—San Francisco Chronicle, April 13

"...one of the only two Turbo Trains in the United States—designed for speeds of up to 170 mph—labored over the West Virginia mountains for eight hours—at 15 mph—one recent night to deposit three passengers in Parkersburg, W.Va. It was a typical run."

—From A.P. report on POTOMAC TURBO, March 30

"...it would be a sad thing to see grass grow between the rails, if Amtrak fails, for riding a train remains a better way to admire America up close than hurtling overhead at near-sonic speed, if you've got the time to spare."

—Earl Dowdy, Detroit News, March 26

Mixed Train of Thoughts

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS: "You report that the PRAIRIE STATE's patronage has dropped, but that just isn't true. Neither is it true that the normal consist is 3 cars. The normal train has 2 Milw E9s, Santa Fe baggage, GN diner (from 1947 EMPIRE BUILDER), CB&Q dome coach (from 1947 TWIN CITIES ZEPHYR), and 2 flat-roof coaches (from NP, SCL, RF&P, & UP). Some days a third flat-roof coach is added. Business seems to be pretty good; at least it's comparable to that on the other Chicago-Milwaukee trains (I observe it north of Chicago on my way to school each morning). I don't think a stop at Normal would boost patronage except during peak periods, when the boost is largely useless anyway. A large proportion of GM&O's passengers are not students but nuns bound to or from the convents near St. Louis. The nuns have been faithful to the GM&O for many years and I'm sure they, as well as well as the GM&O's other patrons, appreciate the more modern cars Amtrak has substituted for the GM&O's antiques (e.g., heavyweight diners with clerestory roofs)"..... FOREGOING INFO from reader Michael Blaszak, who also tells us that the CZ dome sleeper-observation has been bumped off the NORTH COAST HIAWATHA due to insufficient demand for sleeper space and because using it fouled up the parlor pool of the TWIN CITIES HIAWATHA, which also carries an observation. Now the HIAWATHAS carry a parlor-obs Chicago-Minneapolis and no obs Minneapolis-Spokane. Only two of the NORTH COAST's cars operate Chicago-Spokane..... ANOTHER CORRECTION: (from last issue) report on WOLVERINE and ST. CLAIR should have read "State" series instead of "Bay" series sleeper-lounges. Can any reader verify whether parlor service is in effect on them, and when it started?.....

* * *

AMTRAK-PAINTED coach is now running on the COAST DAYLIGHT..... EASTER WEEK saw enlarged consists on the SAN DIEGANS, says reader Clifford Prather; 7 SP low-level coaches, including an articulated coach, were seen mixed in with the Santa Fe hi-levels during that time. Incidentally, the lack of food on those trains is becoming a sore point with riders; there are lounges that have peanuts, but that's it. One private concessioner who applied to Amtrak to serve food on the runs was turned down. Reportedly Amtrak wants to develop its own food service on the trains. But when?..... SAN DIEGO City Council April 13 was to hear Robert J. Swan (see his Southern Calif. transit article in RTN March 6) make a presentation on traffic adequacies of the San Diego Amtrak station..... SAN DIEGAN #777 April 1 northbound

carried over 600 passengers. Consist was 5 F units, baggage, baggage-buffet, and 9 Santa Fe hi-level coaches, reports Mark Weinberger..... AUTOMAT CARS will be finally eradicated in mid-April. They once turned the stomachs of travelers all over the SP system, but recently have run only on the SUNSET LIMITED in addition to the regular diner. For budgeting passengers, the SUNSET's diner will now offer an early dinner at $1.85. Further sign of hope: SP's infamous plastic flowers have disappeared from dining car tables at last, replaced by the Real Thing..... SANTA FE commissary in Los Angeles will soon stock all trains there..... ROCK ISLAND line will soon open a dining car in Chicago's La Salle St. Station as a stationary restaurant for the public, serving lunch and dinner, reports The Fast Mail.....

* * *

AMTRAK PUBLIC relations man John Ormond, and Linda Ann Nies, a passenger representative, were interviewed in the S.F. Chronicle April 13, and reported a few innovations Amtrak has in mind: rail cruise vacation packages, ski trains to the Sierras, youth hostel trains with dorm cars, juke boxes, ski racks, etc., and a plan to send Amtrak buses around to hotels to pick up passengers..... SOUTHERN PACIFIC early this month got a court injunction against further striking by the UTU railroad "herders" who brought about the one-day SP strike recently..... PULLMAN-STANDARD made the low bid for 1100 NYC subway cars to be built and delivered in 1975. Pullman outbid GE, Westinghouse and Rohr..... AMTRAK ANNOUNCED March 23 that Richard M. Boyd of Chicago had been appointed Midwest Regional Manager..... COMIC STRIP "Pogo," one of our favorites, a few weeks ago had Pogo riding a train. The conductor, who doubled as the "candy butcher," had no timetables but did have a lot of leftover candy that wouldn't sell. The conductor remarked "That Amtrak! They unplug the train but don't unplug the conductor."....

* * *

STEAM LOCOMOTIVE in Santa Fe Park in Chanute, Kansas, was the hiding place of six plastic bags of marijuana, girl scout visitors discovered recently ..... ORANGE COUNTY Transit District General Manager Gordon Fielding reportedly is negotiating with Amtrak to reschedule trains on the SAN DIEGAN route to provide commuter service to L.A. A Santa Fe morning commuter that arrived in L.A. at 9am ran until 1965..... STILL MORE corrections from the last issue: the percentage of respondents in L.A. who vaguely connected Amtrak with trains was 20%. The round-end observation on the STARLIGHT does not have new upholstery. The only shopping it got was a complete mechanical overhaul, which was badly needed, say those who rode it when it deadheaded out west..... TOPEKA, KANSAS, may get SUPER CHIEF/EL CAPITAN re-routed thru it, if riders and Congressmen there have their way. Amtrak has indicated it will consider the request, but no definite response has been forthcoming yet..... SOUTHERN PACIFIC Vice President-Operations R. D. Spence issued a letter to employees March 13 emphasizing that there is no discord between the company and Amtrak. Quote: "Any such impression is simply wrong; and it does great harm to Amtrak, to Southern Pacific, and to the conscientious efforts of all but a few of our employees. Despite anything to the contrary you may have heard or read, the Company is firmly committed to doing the best possible job for Amtrak and to helping it succeed." He urged all employees to "display a constructive attitude."....

* * *

"NOTHING HAS changed!" glumly remarked a railfan to us recently. The SP ticket seller had just sworn at him for wanting to use his Rail Travel card for a rail ticket of "only $7.00". When was the last time a store clerk swore at you for producing a charge card for a $7 purchase?..... LAS VEGAS Fun Train has come up with a straight rail ticket ($33.50) for the roundtrip sans hotel reservation..... SKI TRAIN from Los Angeles, the second of two, left March 11, returned the 19th. Load was about 250 in 3

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CONFERENCE ON WESTERN AMTRAK SERVICE

Amtrak Western Regional Manager Bob Edgar, Amtrak Consumer Representative Anne Witherspoon, and other officials and interested individuals making up an advisory committee to report to Amtrak's Washington headquarters, met last month in the San Francisco Bay Area to discuss possible priorities for Western rail service.

Reporting to Vice President-Marketing Harold Graham, the committee said a simplified reservation system is a must in California where Amtrak offices are few and far between. A toll-free number with a tie-in to the central computer in Chicago was favored.

The committee strongly emphasized their plea to "Leave the SUPER CHIEF alone!" The report said that the train is "dearly beloved" to train riders and that Amtrak should leave its present makeup unchanged and promote it as an example of Amtrak's good service. ("It is the very bellweather by which they will judge your sensitivity to and appreciation of the needs and expectations of western passengers.")

On-time performance was another point of emphasis. ("Westerners are very concerned with the fact that the train is on time.... They take it personally that the train crew can't run their train punctually on a very slack timetable.")

Scenery was regarded as an important factor. Maintaining clean windows and scheduling to allow daylight viewing of scenery was mentioned. Regional themes for historic routes to give trains individual identity, with themes carried thru from route brochures to menus was deemed important.

Train travel by Westerners was felt to be "a form of self-indulgence." Amtrak should cater to this, the committee believed. ("Encourage family travel and then provide some place for the children to play other than in the lounge car tripping over those trying to have a drink. What's wrong with a baggagecar playroom?")

On the subject of food, the committee strongly endorsed the idea of simple meals included in the ticket price. But it also suggested having two diners on long-distance trains, one a top-notch eating place where the traveler can splurge when he wishes.

Getting down to specific routes, the S.F.-L.A. run received the most attention. It was felt that the daylight train was not taking advantage of the possibilities of the route. A revival of overnight service was favored. The fact that the train no longer runs into San Francisco proper was seen as a problem. The use of auto-carrying trains, at least on long-distance routes, was considered a "universal interest."

At least one of the suggestions of the committee has apparently already been heard, since Amtrak has decided to maintain the existing SUPER CHIEF service intact (see news item elsewhere).

AMTRAK OFFERS FREE CARS TO TRAIN TRAVELERS

In a strong bid to compete with AUTO-TRAIN and to add an incentive for travelers to take the train to Florida, Amtrak announced that starting April 17 (just after the end of the seasonal FLORIDA SPECIAL service) travelers to Florida from the Northeast or from Chicago and other Midwest points can have a free air-conditioned 1972 auto to use for one week with unlimited mileage. Only gasoline, extra insurance and taxes are paid by the train rider. A minimum of 3 roundtrip fares between N.Y. or Chicago and Miami entitles a party to the Kinney-Universal Rent-A-Car service in any of 7 Florida cities. The minimum required fare from N.Y. would be $290.60, compared to $390.00 on the AUTO-TRAIN. Additional days of car usage beyond one week are also available at "special Amtrak rates."

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sleepers, 3 hi-level coaches, 1 diner and 2 lounges (one a dome). Sun Valley, Idaho, initiated them and reportedly encountered "horrendous" red tape and railroad resistance. Train ran to Ketchum (nearest railhead to Sun Valley, off the main line) and tied up for the whole week the equipment. $101 coach fare included meals; sleeper space was $55 per person extra for a bedroom, $60 for a roomette. First trip (Jan.8) arrived late, but second went well. More space could have been sold, but Amtrak had no more equipment. Baggage car had special ski racks, a feature that pleased everyone. Advertising was basically thru a direct-mail notice to some 25,000 Southern California area skiers of the Daman-Nelson Travel Agency in L.A. Sun Valley was said to have done some newspaper advertising too. A complaint was that not enough advance notice was given to allow skiers to make their plans..... SANTA FE President John S. Reed wrote Paul Rayton about the recent SUPER CHIEF story. He called it a "very generous description of a good trip on our best train." Concerning Santa Fe's policy of providing good passenger service, he said that it "has been both a matter of good public relations and basic corporate policy. We have felt that if you are going to do something, you should do it well." Even after businessmen took largely to planes, he indicated, "the passenger train was still our most visible contact with the American public and we believed in putting our best foot forward"..... LOS ANGELES Times editorialized about the POTOMAC TURBO April 3 and decried the situation, but concluded that "it would be a mistake to conclude ... that Amtrak is a noble experiment which is failing and therefore should be abandoned".....

Urban-Suburban Transit

TRANSIT CONFERENCE SET TO GO

"Curbing the Car" is the title finally selected for the transit fair and conference in Berkeley April 29. The program runs from 9am to 1pm. After lunch, a tour of BART facilities in downtown Berkeley will be given. Keynote speaker for the conference is State Senator Nicholas Petris, a leader in the statewide effort to reduce the problem of automobiles in California. One University of California Professor will speak about his personal experiences in giving up his car. Another will describe a study of neighborhood liveability when increased auto traffic is introduced. A number of other topics are on the agenda. Readers who earlier wrote us for free reservations to the meeting (at the Veterans Building, 1931 Center Street) will receive them. Others may now write directly to "Curbing the Car," Box 5108, Berkeley, CA 94705. Bay Area readers only will find a flyer with coupon bound into the center of this issue of RTN.

BART OPENING DELAYED FURTHER

The opening of the Bay Area Rapid Transit system, now three years behind its original schedule, has been set at some time in the fall. Before the strike of the Rohr Corp., car builders, the system was planned to start running this March. Cars are now being tested on the system, and a number of bugs have been found. The most serious apparently was a flaw whereby electric car motors emitted signals similar to those used to control the computerized system, causing wrong instructions to be given to running cars.

When the system finally gets underway, the Eastbay segments will be the first to run, with the transbay line opening some time in 1973, according to current estimates.

STAGGERED WORK HOURS HELPING NEW YORK SUBWAY CONGESTION

Two years ago a program undertaken by the Port of N.Y. Authority and the Downtown Lower Manhattan Association to alter work hours to reduce peak

subway loads was begun. Early in April a report called the program successful in reducing congestion, even though only 75,000 workers had so far switched working hours. Most of those switching preferred to come and go earlier rather than later in the day. Equipment poorly utilized at off hours could thus be used to handle the traffic diverted from the peak times.

HELPFUL HINTS FOR PASSENGERS BEING MUGGED

The Committee for Better Transit, a Long Island consumer organization, has prepared a facetious flyer advising commuters how to handle emergencies: "Passengers—If attacked:

1. Do not panic: your Transit Authority is concerned about your safety.
2. Pull emergency cord: this will stop train. This will also knock over both you and your attacker...
3. Use shoe, sledge hammer, rock or other heavy weight to break glass on emergency door opening device.
4. Use device to open door to space between this car and next. Do not panic if you are trapped between cars; the transit patrolman will be there as soon as he can key open 16 doors.

Note: Please try to anticipate being mugged in advance. With advance notice, the train crew can be advised to open all doors automatically..."

LETTERS

This is to express my appreciation for the newsletter, which I read with great interest whenever it arrives. I do quite a bit of traveling and used to fly or drive all the time. Of late, as my tiny contribution to the cause of rail passenger service and of anti-pollution, I try to take the train whenever possible. Your newsletter helps to keep me abreast of schedule changes, route changes, etc., and this is the type of news I appreciate most—although I read each newsletter from cover to cover anyway.

In my younger days I was something of a railroad enthusiast, but declining service gradually discouraged me and made me turn to other forms of transportation. I am sure you know only too well what I mean. Even now, it calls for a great amount of patience and perseverance at times to ride the rails, but it is my general impression that things are improving, due to the efforts of people like yourselves. Keep up the good work!

Rev. Christopher Latimer

Washington, D.C.

The March 20 issue of RTN just arrived. I wish to state again that yours is a great publication. You must have many dedicated people, otherwise you couldn't get the info to the reader so fast. Incredibly fast!

I rode the STARLIGHT in February, without linen napkins, without linen tablecloths, without lounge car. Delighted to read that it now has the rear car from our SILVER METEOR. Thought you might like to have a postcard of this car, pre-SCL. Florida's METEOR is still a fine train, and the STARLIGHT needs all the help it can get.

H. E. Price

Miami, Fla.

We appreciate RTN's kind words about PTJ. We also hold your publication in very high regard.

Otto Janssen, Managing Editor
Passenger Train Journal

Hopewell, N.J.

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corporation in its search for innovation and flexibility by forcing it to submit to the bureaucratic bungling of an outmoded and unneeded regulating agency is to do it—and rail passenger service—an injustice.

LETTERS

RTN's 4-page discourse on auto safety (Mar. 20) was more provocative for what it didn't say explicitly than for what it did say. The gap in understanding between the authors of the report, who obviously are aware of the potentials of rail travel and its advantages over the present chaotic system, and the huge majority of Americans, who just as obviously are not aware of the benefits of a rail-oriented passenger system, couldn't be shown in a more convincing manner than by comparing the conclusions of the report with the comments one hears from non-railfan friends and relatives, as well as from legislative and executive leaders in Washington and the various state capitals. Most people believe in the safety of superhighways and modern cars and the necessity for building ever more six-lane shafts more strongly than they believe in Scripture. Even more important, many people depend on the automobile system for their livelihood. Those in the auto assembly and oil industries rely directly on the expansion of automobility, but many more rely indirectly upon automakers' orders for subassembled or raw materials: steel, aluminum, chemical, rubber, and textile concerns and their employees and stockholders.

It is sad that even with the "double-spread slick magazine ads" that RTN dreams about placing against the auto establishment it is doubtful that any meaningful impression could be made on the public; the automobile and its attendant problems are woven so very completely into the fabric of American life that it would require a total restructuring of society to bring about the changes that are needed. Eventually, the problem of auto safety, along with the problem of auto-caused pollution (40 to 75% of airborne impurities, depending upon where one lives), will require such a restructuring, but it is not likely that the saturation point will be reached for some time. Even so, it is more likely that the government, in directing corrective measures, will strive for cleaner engines and safer cars rather than a reform of the automotive system that it helped to instigate by beginning roadbuilding activities in 1916.

Amtrak, of course, faces a crucial turning point in 1973, when 1) the supplementary appropriation is depleted and 2) it can discontinue unprofitable basic routes. It is very unlikely that enough drivers will be enticed from their cars into the skeletal repertoire of trains which Amtrak now runs to convince Congress to appropriate further funds toward rejuvenation of rail passenger service. Besides, Congress will be influenced by the powerful lobbies of the highway industry to vote down any further bills. With no money to work with, what else will Amtrak be able to do except cut out all service but that in the Northeast Corridor?

I'd appreciate it if you could send 4 or 5 copies of "Auto Deaths Up Again!" so I could try to convince some of my more open-minded friends about the evils of the automobile system.

Michael W. Blaszak, Vice President
Northwestern University R.R. Club

Park Ridge, Ill.

BACK ISSUES of RTN are available at 25¢ each. We must ask you to order them separately; we cannot back-date subscriptions due to the clerical expense. All 32 back issues are available with these exceptions: 7 thru 10, 13 thru 15, and no. 21. If out of an issue, we will credit your subscription with an extra issue (if you are a current subscriber) unless you indicate otherwise. Order from Message Media, Box 9007, Berkeley, Calif. 94709. Back issues are sent by third class mail.